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Spring Gobbler Season Ends With Clark Hill Best Area

The spring gobbler hunting season came to a close May 2 with Clark Hill listed as the number one hunting area.

According to Hubert Handy of the Game and Fish Commission, the North Georgia management areas of Blue Ridge, Chattahoochee, John's Mountain, and Lake Russell produced a total of seven turkey gobblers, while Clark Hill produced 10 big birds inside the management area and 40 outside.

April may seem like an unusual time to hunt, but Handy says from the biologist's standpoint, there are several major reasons for the spring season. A well-balanced turkey population requires more hens than gobblers, and spring is the only time the gobblers will come to the hunter's call. In the fall, the hen and her family or flock feed together. A hunter may shoot one bird, then call the young birds back repeatedly until all are killed, but by spring, the year-old brood has broken up and the single birds are more wary. In addition to managing the turkey population, the warm weather season

gives sportsmen a chance to hunt and bag an elusive trophy when other seasons are closed.

Wisest Season

In areas where turkey populations are marginal or on the decline, the spring season is the wisest type of turkey season, especially when overshooting in the fall may destroy what progress has been made. For this reason, game biologists of the Commission are studying the need for a closed fall season in Southeast Georgia, where turkey populations apparently are much lower than in previous years, apparently because of over-hunting.



Game and Fish records on water fatalities show that the main cause of death is lack of proper safety equipment.

'64 Water Deaths At All Time High

The State Game and Fish Commission reports that in 1964 approximately 60,000 pleasure boaters compiled a total record of 79 boating accidents which resulted in the deaths of 56 persons.

Figures show that this total included 31 injuries and an estimated property damage of between \$30,000 and \$50,000. In addition to this, the Commission reports that a total of 90 other persons lost their lives during 1964 as a result of drowning where no boat was involved.

In the boat accident department, capsizing was the most frequent accident with 24 reported; running a close second in accidents was a report of 19 persons falling overboard; and the third most frequent accident was boats striking underwater objects with a total of 17 accidents. Among the boat accidents reported to the Game and Fish Commission during 1964 was a report of a boat towing a surfboard rider over the dam of Jackson Lake. Miraculously, neither the boat operator nor the surfer was seriously injured.

Among the non-boating water deaths in Georgia during 1964, 37 occurred in the streams of Georgia with 32 reported from farm ponds and 21 reported from the several major impoundments of Georgia. 31 of these people who drowned were swimming at the time of drowning, while 19 drowned as a result of falling into the water. 18 were wading and stepped over their head, 3 committed suicide by drowning themselves, while the cause of 8 of the drownings was unknown.



James Lackey, left, and his brother Danny show that the fisherman's size makes no difference. Fishing at a small pond in Talbotton, James caught the 10 1/4 pound largemouth and Danny brought in the 10 1/2 paunder.

Fighting White Bass Now

Stocked At Lake Jackson

Efforts to establish fighting white bass in Lake Jackson are in full swing this spring.

Fishery biologists of the State Game and Fish Commission say they have stocked some 300 bass in Jackson to supplement last year's stocking of 500 fish.

Most of the white bass were captured by the Commission in Lake Lanier and Sinclair with the aid of an electric shocking machine which temporarily stuns the fish, but does not harm them or their eggs. The dazed fish are then scooped up with dip nets and placed in holding tanks and live baskets before being transported from the lake in a specially-equipped stocking truck.

Population studies on Jackson in recent years have shown a need for a carnivorous species to supplement declining largemouth bass fishing in Jackson, as well as establishment of a more abundant food supply both for largemouth bass and for the lake's large number of emaciated crappie. Commission biologists say white bass will fill some of the void in largemouth bass fishing without competing with the existing bass population or further affecting crappie.

The Jackson stocking effort will be multiplied many times by natural reproduction from the roe-laden female white bass, most of which were ready to spawn when they were placed in Jackson. The female white bass usually deposits more than 500,000 eggs during spawning. Some of last year's stock fish have been caught by anglers, apparently on their own spawning run this year in Jackson. However, complete success of the Jackson stocking

wouldn't be apparent in the fisherman's creel in a large measure for several more years.

Threadfin Shad

As a companion measure, the Commission last year stocked threadfin shad along with the white bass to provide Jackson with a good forage species. These shad have spawned successfully, and appear well established in Jackson this year. Since threadfins never get larger than six inches in length, averaging three to four inches, they make an excellent year-round food supply for largemouth bass, crappie, and white bass. Because threadfins die off with cold winter temperatures, the survivors spawn heavily in the spring, providing a large crop of edible minnow-size tidbits for carnivorous fish.

Leon Kirkland, fisheries coordinator of the Game and Fish Commission, emphasizes that fishing for white bass on Lanier and Sinclair won't be impaired by the removal of only 300 fish. "As a matter of fact, one good white bass fisherman can sometimes take out this many fish in one year by himself," Kirkland said.

He pointed out that normally less than three per cent of the fish actually present in the shocking area at the time are captured, leaving 97 per cent or more of the fish for fishermen and for spawning stock. Any rough fish or carp captured during the operation are removed from the lake. Fish which are stunned by the current but not captured recover and swim away unharmed within two to five minutes or less.

Illegal Netting

Kirkland says that illegal netting is threatening the new white bass population in Lake Jackson.

Since April 1 wildlife rangers have removed 19 illegal gill nets from the Jackson Lake area. According to reports these nets had been used in taking several species of game fish including white bass.

Kirkland said that rangers Sam Letson, R. L. Tillman, H. H. Rape, W. B. Johnson and others have been moved into the area and that the Commission hopes that residents will report any nets with a mesh under the legal three-inch size.



Commission personnel load the white bass on a hatchery truck before taking them to Lake Jackson for stocking.



Game and Fish Biologist Mike Bowling scoops up a large white bass. The bass is temporarily stunned by an electric shocking machine.

Wildlife In Georgia

(THIRD IN A SERIES)



LARGEMOUTH BASS

Largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) is found in lakes, rivers and farm ponds throughout Georgia. It is one of the state's most important game fish. Like the smallmouth, largemouth bass belong to the Centrarchid, or sunfish family.

The largemouth and smallmouth basses are frequently confused, but there are several good ways to tell them apart. The largemouth's upper jaw reaches beyond its eye, while in the smallmouth it comes only to the front of the eye.

The color pattern of the largemouth bass differs from that of the smallmouth. Largemouths are greenish in color with a lengthwise strip in the middle of the sides of its body.

The largemouth is probably the most prized of all Georgia game fish. The world's record largemouth bass, a 22 pound, four ounce lunker, was caught in Lake Montgomery in Georgia.

Life Cycle

Largemouth bass build circular nests on the bottom of a lake or stream. The male builds the nest in water from three to four feet deep. The spawning season is in the spring, the exact time depending on the temperature of the water.

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Biological aides George Walker, Marvin Shell and Charles Bryan block off a two acre cove during a population study. The net will prevent fish from escaping into the lake.



During the second step of a study, a fish toxicant is spread in the water. The chemical prevents the gills from functioning properly so that all fish within the enclosed area are killed.



After the toxicant takes effect many fish within the area swim to the surface and can be netted. Most however, sink to the bottom and can only be collected the second day.

Scientific Count

Spring Fish Population Studies Underway by G & F Commission

The State Game and Fish Commission reports that the annual fish population studies on the major lakes are underway and running full speed.

Leon Kirkland, Coordinator of Fish Management for the Commission, explains that the surveys, conducted in the spring and fall, are designed to determine the composition of the fish population in the lakes; types of fish present and information on their ages, length, and weight.

Fisheries biologists choose a cove in the lake, approximately two acres in size, to carry out their investigations. The cove is blocked off across its mouth by a huge net which prevents any fish inside the area from escaping. Then a fish toxicant is applied to the water which destroys the ability of the fish to take oxygen into their gills, causing immediate suffocation. This treatment does not harm the water for drinking or other use. The toxicant wears off after 24 hours allowing other fish to return to the cove. The fish population sample is restricted to the two-acre cove by the amount of material used and by the application of a controlling chemical used outside the net in case the toxicant threatens to spread into the rest of the lake. This prevents any injury to fish outside the sample cove.

Fish Come to Surface

Following the application of the toxicant, the fish begin coming to the surface in a groggy condition, and are quickly netted up by Commission personnel, taken ashore, weighed, measured, and counted. The information is

primarily, the population study is designed to provide accurate information and records on the fish population of the lakes to guide Commission biologists in future management steps, such as stocking of new species of fish. Using the data, the biologists can recommend action to improve fishing.

Water Temperature

The spring studies are conducted when the water temperature reaches 70 degrees and the large fish come to the shallow coves to spawn. In the fall, biologists carry on the studies to determine the reproduction of all species for that year. During the program, one lake is studied every two years. This year the studies are being conducted on lakes Seminole, Blackshear, Jackson, Lanier, and Allatoona.

Wildlife in Georgia

Continued from Page 2

Food

Largemouth bass are carnivorous. They feed upon small fish, such as bream, threadfin shad and other species, insects, frogs, crawfish and other fish life.



Each fish is measured and weighed. From data collected in this manner, biologists can determine the overall condition of the lake and can plan future management and stocking programs.



Fisheries biologist Phil Pierce inspects threadfin shad taken during a survey. The department predicts that this species, stocked recently in Lakes Jackson and High Falls will be an abundant food supply for game fish.

Wildlife Management Experts

Active During Spring Months

Spring may be a lazy season for many, but not for wildlife management technicians of the State Game and Fish Commission.

Early this spring on the managed areas, game biologists carried out controlled woodland burning. The burning opens dense areas and encourages low-growing plants which are good wildlife feed.

On another closely related project, cleared sections called food plots on 4 public hunting areas and 15 game management areas are being planted and fertilized. These patches of grass, clover and lespedeza, in addition to the burned areas, will increase the food supply for large and small game and this in turn will improve the hunting this fall. By the same token, in areas populated by deer, salt blocks are placed near trails.

Some rangers and biologists are conducting dove surveys in which all the doves cooing in several standard call-count routes are counted. When compared with previous years, this information is used as a basis for federal dove regulations. Similar activities are deer track counts and brouse studies which give the Commission biologists an idea of the increase or decrease of the deer population, especially in counties under consideration for a change in their deer season or regulations.

Counting studies enable the Commission to manage wildlife so that good hunting may be provided not only this fall but in future years. Other equally important tasks on management areas include control of poachers and dogs, who constitute the greatest year-round threat to Georgia's deer herd. Night-hunter patrols are carried out on an unscheduled basis at any minute by

rangers and refuge managers.

Rangers are especially vigilant to halt dogs chasing deer in the spring and summer, when pregnant does or their young fawns are easily run down and killed by common domestic dogs running loose. For this reason, game technicians ask dog owners and sportsmen to pen their dogs while the fawning season is still in effect through July.

Spring wildlife management practices include placing mineral licks or salt blocks near deer trails.



Ranger A. C. Abernathy counts deer tracks in the Chattahoochee management area near Helen, Georgia.



Game Biologist Scott Fussell starts a controlled burn which will increase quail feed and deer browse in the Allatoona public hunting area.

STATE GAME & FISH COMMISSION
Public Information Office
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